

SPECIFICATION

Electronic Version 1.2.8

Stylesheet Version 1.0

NIGHT LIGHT FOR PLUMBING FIXTURES

Background of Invention

- [0001] The invention relates to the lighting arts. It is especially applicable to the nocturnal illumination of bathroom plumbing fixtures such as faucets, showerheads, toilets, and the like which produce an accessible water flow, and will be described with particular reference thereto. However, the invention will also find application in the illumination of plumbing fixtures in other settings where operation in darkness or other conditions of poor visibility is encountered, in the lighting and operative status indication (e.g., temperature, flow rate, et cetera) of fluid conduits conducting accessible or inaccessible flow of water or another fluid, and in other similar applications.
- [0002] Rooms such as bathrooms can be very dark at night. Turning on the room light at night is uncomfortable to the eyes due to darkness-induced pupil dilation, and full illumination at daytime levels is typically unnecessary due to improved light collection of the dilated pupils as well as the adequacy of limited visibility for most bathroom-related activities. It is thus desired to provide a lower level of illumination for a bathroom at night.
- [0003] In the past various devices, known as night lights, have been used for illuminating bathrooms and other dark places at night. These night lights typically employ incandescent bulbs or fluorescent tubes to provide a reduced level of illumination as compared with daytime lighting. The reduced light level produced by the night light is sufficient for using the bathroom facilities without being so bright as to be intrusive, disorienting, or even painful to individuals with darkness-induced pupil dilation.
- [0004] These past night lights have several disadvantages. They usually monopolize an

electrical outlet. This is particularly problematic in modern bathrooms where a large number of electrical appliances are already employed, such as electric razors, hair dryers, air fresheners, and the like. In many such night lights, there is no power cable. Rather, the blades of the electrical plug are molded rigidly into the night light housing and the night light is affixed to the electrical outlet by the electrical plug blades. This can further limit the electrical outlet usage due to the size and unwieldiness of the affixed night light which not only occupies an outlet but also can block an adjacent outlet.

[0005] Past night lights are also not usually located in very close proximity to the bathroom sink, faucet, washbasin, showerhead, or other apparatus which is the destination of the night-wandering person's trek. As mentioned above, in many cases the night light is directly affixed to the electrical outlet by rigidly incorporated electrical plug blades. It is therefore located some distance away and does not illuminate the washbasin, toilet, or the like with good efficiency. Placement of conventional night lights near bathroom plumbing fixtures, especially faucets, is limited by safety concerns arising from an incompatibility of the 120 volt a.c. electrical power with the externally accessible water flow.

[0006] The spatial separation of past night lights from the washbasin also complicates the operation of the night light. In one operative method, the night light remains on constantly, or at least whenever the room is dark. This method wastes electricity, and can also produce stray light that can be annoying to sleeping individuals. Safety issues can also arise with an unattended conventional night light. In the case of an incandescent night light, a hot incandescent bulb is left unattended at night. In the case of a fluorescent night light, a source employing a high voltage electrical discharge is left unattended.

[0007] In another operative method, the night light is manually switched on and off as needed. This method requires that night-wandering person physically access the night light, which as mentioned before is typically not located very close to the target plumbing fixture. This method disadvantageously leaves the user unaided in locating the night light in the dark. Such a situation is not only inconvenient, but can also be dangerous as the person is left to blindly probe in search of the electrically energized

device.

[0008] Yet another disadvantage of past night lights is that they are operatively disconnected from the associated plumbing fixture. For example, a conventional night light does not communicate with the washbasin faucet and cannot inform the user of its status. This can be problematic at night, because due to the reduced light levels (even with the night light) and the drowsy state of the night-wandering person, he or she is apt to be careless and run the faucet too hot or too cold, or at an undesirably high flow rate. A similarly dangerous situation can come to pass for an early-rising person attempting to take a shower in the dark, so as not to disturb other sleeping individuals.

[0009] Still yet another disadvantage of past night lights is that they do not take advantage of the aesthetically pleasing design of modern bathroom sinks, which often have acrylic or other multi-faceted light-transmissive and light-reflective handles. These handles can be difficult to see using past night lights due to the limited reflectivity of the light-transmissive material.

[0010] The present invention contemplates an improved apparatus and method that overcomes the above-mentioned limitations and others.

Summary of Invention

[0011] In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, a night light for use in conjunction with an associated plumbing fixture is disclosed. The plumbing fixture includes a spout and a handle for controlling a water flow from the spout. The night light includes an LED arrangement comprising at least one LED disposed on or in the associated plumbing fixture for directly illuminating at least one of the handle, the water flow, and an associated basin.

[0012] In accordance with another embodiment of the present invention, a plumbing fixture is disclosed, including a showerhead or a faucet. The showerhead or faucet includes a water outlet for emitting a water flow and a handle for controlling the water flow. At least one LED is arranged on or in the showerhead or faucet and viewable by an associated user of the plumbing fixture. A light-transmissive encapsulant seals the LED and transmits light produced by the LED to the associated user. A controller

produces a controller output for controlling the LED light emission responsive to at least one of a water flow rate, a water flow temperature, an ambient light level, and a position of the handle.

[0013] In accordance with yet another embodiment of the present invention, a lamp is disclosed. The lamp is adapted for arrangement on a faucet or showerhead including spout and at least one handle for controlling a water flow out of the spout. The lamp includes: a printed circuit board with conductive traces arranged thereon; an LED source including at least one LED arranged on the printed circuit board and electrically powered via the conductive traces; and a light-transmissive encapsulant sealing the LED source and the conductive traces.

[0014] One advantage of the present invention resides in illuminating a faucet or showerhead feature such as a handle to facilitate a night wandering person in locating the control.

[0015] Another advantage of the present invention resides in providing a low power, hermetically sealed light source for the safe illumination of water-producing fixtures.

[0016] Another advantage of the present invention resides in providing visual feedback relating to water stream parameters such as the flow rate or the water temperature.

[0017] Yet another advantage of the present invention resides in automatic activation of night illumination under low-light conditions.

[0018] Still yet another advantage of the present invention resides in convenient retrofitting of existing plumbing fixtures with lamps for providing night illumination, visual feedback information, or aesthetic value.

[0019] Numerous advantages and benefits of the present invention will become apparent to those of ordinary skill in the art upon reading and understanding the following detailed description.

Brief Description of Drawings

[0020]

The invention may take form in various components and arrangements of components, and in various steps and arrangements of steps. The drawings are only

for purposes of illustrating the preferred embodiments and are not to be construed as limiting the invention.

[0021] FIGURE 1 shows an exemplary lavatory with a faucet that suitably practices an embodiment of the invention.

[0022] FIGURE 2 shows an exemplary lavatory with a faucet that suitably practices another embodiment of the invention.

[0023] FIGURE 3 shows an exemplary lavatory with a faucet that suitably practices yet another embodiment of the invention.

[0024] FIGURE 4 shows an exemplary lavatory with a faucet that suitably practices still yet another embodiment of the invention.

[0025] FIGURE 5 shows an exemplary lavatory that suitably practices an embodiment of the invention wherein the night light provides both illumination and a visual indication of the operative status of the lavatory.

[0026] FIGURE 6 shows an exemplary lavatory with a centrally located single-handle faucet that suitably practices an embodiment of the invention.

[0027] FIGURE 7 shows a close up of the handle of the lavatory of FIGURE 6 with the night light arranged thereon.

[0028] FIGURE 8 shows an enlarged view of the night light of FIGURES 6 and 7.

[0029] FIGURE 9 shows another embodiment of a handle-based night light for a single-handle faucet.

[0030] FIGURE 10 shows another embodiment of a single-handle lavatory including a night light in formed in accordance with yet another embodiment of the invention.

[0031] FIGURE 11 shows an enlarged view of the modified bottom faucet cover plate of FIGURE 10.

[0032] FIGURE 12 shows a showerhead that suitably practices a detachably fastenable embodiment of the invention.

[0033] FIGURE 13 shows a showerhead with an LED lamp arranged on a shaft of a water flow control handle.

[0034] FIGURE 14 shows an exemplary electrical circuit for controlling LEDs based on an ambient light intensity.

[0035] FIGURE 15 shows an exemplary analog circuit for controlling a red and a blue LED responsive to a water flow temperature input.

[0036] FIGURE 16 shows an exemplary circuit for controlling a multi-color LED arrangement based on a water flow temperature input.

Detailed Description

[0037] With reference to FIGURE 1, a lavatory 10 has a faucet 12 and a washbasin 14. The faucet 12 includes a spout 16, a hot water handle 18, and a cold water handle 20. The spout 16 delivers an accessible flow of water 22 responsive to turning on one or both handles 18, 20. The person using the lavatory 10 can control the water temperature and flow rate in an open-loop fashion by adjusting the settings of the hot and cold water handles 18, 20 to suit individual preferences. An optional aerator 24 aerates the water flow 22 prior to expulsion from the spout 16 to provide improved flow uniformity. The faucet 12 is connected to hot and cold water supplies (not shown) through a hot water pipe 26 and a cold water pipe 28, respectively. A drain 30 connects the basin 14 to a sewer or other water removal system (not shown). A strainer, stop 32 or other interface is optionally included at the entrance to the drain 30. The handles 18, 20 can employ compression valves, cartridge valves, or other valving mechanisms (not shown).

[0038] The lavatory 10 is exemplary only, and many variations thereof can be while remaining within the scope of the invention. For example, the two-control faucet 12 having two handles 18, 20 can be replaced by a single-control faucet (e.g., FIGURE 6) employing cartridge, ball, or disk-type washerless valves. Similarly, the illustrated embodiment shows a faucet 12 having a single raised base or deck 34, which however could be replaced by a concealed deck or a wide-spread faucet design having separate mountings for the spout and the handles. The aesthetic aspects of the lavatory 10 are also broadly variable. For example, there are a wide range of

decorative spout designs commercially available. The invention embodiments described herein are readily adaptable to conform with all such variations. The invention embodiments are also readily adaptable to other types of bathroom plumbing fixtures such as showerheads (e.g., FIGURE 9), and are furthermore readily adaptable to other types of fluid flow fixtures beyond the bathroom.

[0039] With continuing reference to FIGURE 1, in one suitable embodiment of the invention, a night light 40 includes a light emitting diode (LED) 42 advantageously arranged to produce illumination 44 directed downward into the basin 14. In one preferred embodiment, the LED 42 is a light emitting diode such as a phosphide-based red light emitting diode, a blue or blue/green nitride-based light emitting diode, a phosphor-coated UV light emitting diode that emits white or other colored light, or the like.

[0040] Those skilled in the art will recognize that such light emitting diodes are low voltage, low current devices with typical operating voltages of a few volts and typical operating currents of a few tens or hundreds of milliamperes. Thus, the safety concerns that exist regarding the arrangement of prior art incandescent or fluorescent lamp-based night lights in close vicinity to an accessible flow of water are alleviated. The LED 42 is powered by an electrical cable 46 connected to an electrical power supply (not shown). In a suitable embodiment, the power supply is a 120 volt a.c. house electricity in conjunction with an a.c./d.c. converter known to the art or other electrical circuit for reducing the supplied power to conform to the low voltage, direct low current power requirements of the LED 42. It will be appreciated that the power conversion circuitry can be located well away from the lavatory 10, e.g. at the wall power socket, to ensure the safety of the night light 40 by admitting only low voltage, low current controlled and limited power to the lavatory 10 via the cable 46. Alternatively or in combination, a ground-fault-interrupt (GFI) protected AC outlet or other protected power source is employed to reduce the electrical shock hazard.

[0041] In one suitable embodiment, a class II power supply disposed away from the lavatory 10 is used to drive the LED 42. As is known to those skilled in the art, the low voltage output of a class II power supply meets relevant electrical code requirements for use in the vicinity of the lavatory 10, and is also sufficient to drive a

typical LED operating at a few volts and a few tens of milliamperes, e.g. 90 milliamperes. Alternatively, the circuitry can be located on or near the lavatory 10 in a hermetically sealed containment to minimize the electrical shock hazard.

[0042] In yet another suitable embodiment one or more dry-cell batteries are used. The batteries are suitably arranged in a battery pack located under or near the lavatory to provide easy access for battery replacement. It is also contemplated to use an inductively rechargeable battery such as are frequently employed in cardiac pacemakers. Since the inductively rechargeable battery does not need to be physically accessible for recharging, such a battery can be arranged inside the faucet or in other relatively inaccessible places.

[0043] With continuing reference to FIGURE 1, the safety and low power consumption inherent in the low voltage, low current LED 42 makes it feasible to operate the night light 40 continuously. However, in the illustrated embodiment, an ambient light sensor 48, such as a photodiode known to the art, is included to control the operation of the night light 40. The sensor 48 produces a signal related to the intensity of the ambient light. In one preferred embodiment, the LED 42 is activated only when the sensor 48 indicates that the ambient light is below a selected threshold intensity.

[0044] FIGURE 2 shows another suitable lavatory embodiment 200, in which a night light 240 includes a light emitting diode (LED) 242 arranged inside a modified aerator 224. The night light 240 preferably uses a hermetically sealed light emitting diode for the LED 242, so that it is impervious to the flow of water. Furthermore, because the LED 242 is a low voltage, low current device, there is no danger of electrical shock to the person using the lavatory 200, even in the unlikely event of a failure of the hermetic sealing. Moreover, the extremely high reliability of hermetically sealed light emitting diodes compared with the much higher failure rates of incandescent or even fluorescent lamps ensures that the LED 242 will rarely if ever need to be replaced. In one contemplated embodiment, the aerator 224 and the LED 242 are manufactured as a single unitary component which is replaceable.

[0045] Because the LED 242 is actually contacting the water flow 22, emitted light 244 is partially wave guided along the water stream 22 to provide direct illumination of the

stream 22 . This is particularly advantageous because the person using the lavatory 200 is usually interacting directly with the water flow 22 . This arrangement creates the visual effect that the water stream 22 itself is glowing with light, i.e. the water 22 appears to be the light source.

[0046] With continuing reference to FIGURE 2 , the LED 242 is a low power device which is suitable for continuous operation. However, in the embodiment shown, a pair of switches 260 , 262 (shown schematically) are linked to the hot and cold water handles 18 , 20 , respectively. The switches 260 , 262 connect the LED 242 to a power supply (not shown) through an electrical cable 264 running alongside or inside the spout 16 , and activate the LED 242 in response to opening of one or both of the handles 18 , 20 . In addition to advantageously conserving electrical power, in this arrangement LED 242 turns on and off in response to the flowing or lack of flow of the water stream 22 . This further adds to the aesthetic appeal by making it appear that it is the water stream 22 itself that is illuminated, or colored in the case of a colored LED 242 , since the illuminating only appears coincident with a water flow 22 .

[0047] In the illustrated embodiment of FIGURE 2 , on/off switches are shown, so that the illumination of the LED 242 appears fully on as soon as one of the handles 18 , 20 are opened. In another contemplated embodiment (not shown), the handles operate a variable resistance or other current controller which controls the amount of current applied to the LED 242 . In this manner the illuminating intensity depends upon the water flow 22 rate. In yet another variation (not shown) , the LED 242 is replaced by two LEDs, one blue and one red. The blue LED is connected to the cold water handle while the red LED is connected to the hot water handle. In this manner, the water flow source (hot water or cold water) is indicated by the color of the water stream.

[0048] FIGURE 3 shows another suitable lavatory embodiment 300 , in which a night light 340 includes two light emitting devices (LEDs) 342 , one each associated with the hot and cold water handles 18 , 20 . The night light 340 advantageously illuminates the handles 18 , 20 which are the tactile target of a night-wandering person who wants to use the lavatory 300 . In this embodiment, the LEDs 342 are advantageously low power light emitting diodes that are operated continuously, such continuous operation being appropriate because the LEDs 342 illuminate only the handles 18 ,

[0050] With reference to FIGURE 5 , yet another suitable lavatory embodiment 500 is shown, in which a night light 540 provides a visual indication of the temperature of the water flow 22 . The night light 540 includes two LEDs 542 of a first class, three LEDs 544 of a second class, and two LEDs 546 of a third class. In one suitable embodiment, the LEDs 542 of the first class are blue nitride-based light emitting diodes, the LEDs 544 of the second class are white phosphor-coated nitride-based light emitting diodes, and the LEDs 546 of the third class are red phosphide-based light emitting diodes. Of course other numbers and/or colors of LEDs can be employed.

Page 10 of 41

embodiment, the sensor 552 contacts the spout 16 but does not directly contact the water flow 22, so that the temperature is indirectly measured. This indirect temperature measurement arrangement is suitable for spouts which are highly thermally conductive, such as metal spouts. In another suitable embodiment (not shown), the temperature sensor directly contacts the water flow 22. In either arrangement, the controller 550 activates one or more of the LEDs 542, 544, 546 based on the output of the temperature sensor.

[0052] In a suitable embodiment, the LEDs 542 are activated when the temperature is below a selected lower threshold, thus indicating a cold water flow by a blue illumination. The LEDs 544 are activated when the temperature is within a preferred temperature range extending from the lower threshold to a selected upper threshold, thus indicating by a white, green, or other selected illumination hue that the preferred temperature range is achieved. The LEDs 546 are activated when the temperature exceeds the upper threshold, thus indicating by a red illumination that the water is too hot. Red is a preferred color to indicate that the upper temperature threshold has been exceeded because red is typically associated danger, and an overly hot water flow can be a dangerous condition. Optionally, the controller 550 causes the LEDs 546 flash when the temperature exceeds a danger threshold greater than the upper threshold, to even more strongly indicate to the night wandering person that the water flow 22 is extremely hot.

[0053] It will be appreciated that the embodiment of FIGURE 5 can, with minor modifications, be adapted to provide a visual indication of other operating parameters of a lavatory or other fluid flow fixture. For example, the temperature sensor 552 can be replaced by a flow meter which, along with appropriate changes to the control circuitry 550, forms a night light that is responsive to the water flow rate. Similarly, the temperature sensor 552 can be replaced by an appropriate chemical sensor and appropriate changes to the control circuitry 550 to form an illuminated indicator responsive to the presence or absence of a selected chemical in the flow, which flow can be a water flow or a flow of another type of fluid.

[0054] With reference to FIGURE 6, an embodiment 600 of the invention incorporating a centrally-located single-handle faucet 602 is described. Such faucets are well known

to the art, and typically are operated by pulling a handle knob 604 upward or away from the faucet 602 to turn on the water, and by rotating the knob 604 to selectively mix the hot and cold water supplies. In one common embodiment, the knob 604 is manufactured of an acrylic resin or other light-transmissive material, often with aesthetically pleasing facets for light reflection and light scattering. The faucet 602 also includes an aesthetically pleasing contoured spout 606 terminating in an aerator 608 for producing a water flow 610, and the faucet is mounted on a base 612. Instead of the base 612, the faucet 602 could be mounted on a concealed deck (not shown). The faucet 602 operates in conjunction with a washbasin 14 and associated piping 26, 28, 30 and strainer or stop 32 which are essentially as described previously with respect to FIGURE 1.

[0055] With continuing reference to FIGURE 6 and with further reference to FIGURES 7 and 8, a night light 620 is mounted on a handle shaft 622 on which the handle knob 604 is disposed. The night light 620 includes a plurality of LED's 624 arranged on a printed circuit (pc) board 626 shaped into an annular disk having a central opening 628 which receives the handle shaft 622. The annular disk-shaped pc board 626 and the LEDs 624 disposed thereon are sealed by an encapsulant 630 to prevent damage to the electronics by water exposure. In a suitable embodiment, the encapsulant 630 is formed in a mold which conforms with a recess, surface, or feature 632 of the handle of the faucet 602 so that a surface 634 of the encapsulant 630 matingly fits into or onto the surface or feature 632. The manufacturing of the night light 620 can be adapted to produce night lights compatible with a wide range of styles and designs of faucets by employing different suitable molds. It will further be appreciated that the night light 620 is particularly suitable for retro-fitting into existing single-handle faucets of various designs and styles.

[0056] The pc board 626 includes conductive traces (not shown) which interconnect the LEDs 624 and optional associated control elements such as a light sensor 636 to define electrical power and control circuitry for driving the LEDs 624. Preferably, any associated elements such as the light sensor 636, ASIC control and/or power circuitry (not shown) and the like are also sealed by the encapsulant 630 to form a hermetically sealed, waterproof unitary night light 620. Power leads 638 pass through the encapsulant 630 and provide electrical power to the pc board 626. The leads 638

connect to an electrical line 640 leading to a class II power supply (not shown). Alternatively, a battery pack or other type of power supply is used.

[0057] With continuing reference to FIGURES 6 – 8, the light sensor 636 detects the ambient light level. Responsive to the ambient light level decreasing below a selected turn-on light level criterion, the circuitry on the pc board 626 activates the LEDs 624 to produce light output 642 (indicated schematically by arrows in FIGURE 6) which is directed into the light transmissive knob 604. The light 642 passes through the light-transmissive knob 604 and is also significantly scattered by the knob 604. The knob 604 "glows" with the light 642, providing illumination for the night-wandering person and making it particularly easy for such a person to locate the knob 604 in the dark.

[0058] With the arrangement shown in FIGURE 8, wherein the light sensor 636 and the LEDs 624 are in close relative proximity (i.e., within range of optical communication), the spectral responsivity of the light sensor 636 is advantageously selected to be outside the spectral range of the LED light output 642. This spectral separation reduces the possibility of undesirable interactions such as the light 642 of the LEDs 624 causing the light sensor 636 to shut off the LEDs 624. Of course, the 630 should also be light-transmissive for the spectral range monitored by the light sensor 636, and the spectral range monitored by the light sensor 636 should fall well within the ambient spectrum. In a suitable embodiment, the LEDs 624 emit light in the visible spectrum and the light sensor 636 monitors the infra-red spectrum and includes a visible light blocking filter.

[0059] With proper selection of relative spectral ranges, the light sensor 636 is suitably mounted on the pc board 626. This arrangement is particularly convenient for electrical interconnection as the pc board 626 suitably includes conductive traces effectuating the interconnections. However, if a sensor other than an ambient light sensor is desired, such as a water temperature or flow sensor (not shown), the sensor is preferably located remotely from the pc board 626 where it can effectively monitor the desired parameter. In such a case, leads (not shown) additional to the power leads 638 are included to connect the remote sensor with the pc board 626. In another contemplated variation, the LEDs 624 include a plurality of colors, and combined with appropriate circuitry on the pc board 626 and a temperature sensor (not shown)

implement a color indicator of temperature operatively similar to that of FIGURE 5 .

[0060] With reference to FIGURE 9 , another embodiment of a night light 650 suitable for use with a single-handle faucet similar to that of FIGURE 6 is shown. As is known to those skilled in the art, the knob 604 is typically connected with the shaft 622 by a threaded fastener which is accessed through a removable top portion 652 of the knob 604 . In such arrangements there is often an interior open volume 654 inside the 604 which is unused once the knob is affixed to the shaft 622 . As seen in FIGURE 9 , the night light 650 is suitably arranged in the open volume 654 . The night light 650 includes a disk-shaped pc board 656 with one or more LEDs, e.g. four LEDs 658 in FIGURE 9 , arranged thereon. The pc board 656 and the LEDs 658 are hermetically sealed by an encapsulant 660 which is advantageously formed using a mold to substantially conform with the open volume 654 . Electrical leads 662 are suitably passed through an opening (not shown) in the knob 604 .

[0061] The night light 650 is suitable for retro-fitting existing single-handle faucets. However, the retro-fitting of the night light 650 typically requires modifying the knob 604 by drilling or otherwise generating the opening for the leads 662 . Although not shown in FIGURE 9 , it will be appreciated that a light sensor or other controller elements are suitably included on the pc board 656 to provide selective illumination responsive to low ambient light or other conditions.

[0062] With reference to FIGURE 10 , an embodiment 700 incorporating a centrally-located single-handle faucet 702 is described. The faucet 702 is operated by pulling a handle knob 704 upward or away from the faucet 702 to turn on the water, and by rotating the knob 704 to selectively mix the hot and cold water supplies. The faucet 702 also includes a spout 706 terminating in an aerator 708 for producing a water flow 710 , and the faucet is mounted on a base 712 . Instead of the base 712 , the faucet 702 could be mounted on a concealed deck (not shown). The faucet 702 operates in conjunction with a washbasin 14 and associated piping 26 , 28 , 30 and strainer or stop 32 which are essentially as described previously with respect to FIGURE 1 . The faucet 702 also includes a lamp 720 mounted on a detachable lower cover plate 722 of the spout 706 . As is known to those skilled in the art, many commercial faucets include a detachable lower plate to provide convenient access to

the internal plumbing and valving of the faucet. The lamp 720 includes one or more LEDs and optional optics (not shown) to direct light 724 toward the water flow 710. The light 724 is partially wave guided by the water stream 710 to illuminate the water flow 710. Optionally, the lamp 720 includes a water flow sensor for selectively activating the LEDs responsive to initiation of water flow.

[0063] With continuing reference to FIGURE 10 and with further reference to FIGURE 11, the lamp 720 is suitable for retro-fitting existing faucets. In a suitable retro-fit, the cover plate 722 is a replacement cover plate which includes LEDs 730 mounted thereon and which replaces the original lower detachable cover plate of the spout 706. Optionally, associated optics such as lenses or filters (not shown) are also included to direct light produced by the LEDs 730 onto the water stream 710. Because the lamp 720 is located underneath the spout 706, it is likely to be exposed to water, soap, or other contaminants. Hence, the lamp 720 is sealed in an encapsulant 732. A pc board (not shown) can be used in constructing the lamp 720, in a manner similar to the embodiments 620, 650 described previously. However, because of aesthetic concerns in having an exposed pc board on the spout, coupled with the design freedom provided by the detachable cover plate 722, in the illustrated embodiment no pc board is employed in mounting the LEDs 730.

[0064] Electrical connecting of the lamp 720 is particularly convenient because, as is well known to those skilled in the art, many centrally located single-handle faucets include a continuous open volume extending through significant portions of the spout and the handle region and accessible from the base 712. Hence, as shown in FIGURES 10 and 11, an electrical cord 734 connects with the LEDs 730 via an opening 736 in the cover plate 722, runs through the open volume of the faucet 702 (this portion of the cord is shown as a dotted line in FIGURE 10) and is accessible below or behind the lavatory 700. In this manner, the lamp 720 presents an aesthetically pleasing appearance without exposed wires.

[0065] With reference to FIGURE 12, a detachably attachable LED lamp 800 formed in accordance with the invention is described, for use with a showerhead 802 disposed on a distal end of a pipe or spout 804 connected to a shower wall 806. The lamp 800 clamps onto the spout 804 in detachable manner by a clamping collar 808. A plurality

of LEDs *810* are arranged on a slanted bottom portion *812* of the collar *808* oriented so as to provide illumination *814* (schematically shown as arrows) into the shower. Due to the moist environment, the LEDs *810* are sealed in an encapsulant *816*. The LEDs *810* are powered by a replaceable battery *818*, such as a button-type dry cell commonly used in watches, via appropriate wiring for example provided by a pc board (not shown). Optionally, selected feedback control is provided. In the exemplary lamp *800*, an ambient light sensor *820* is disposed on an opposite side of the collar *808* from the LEDs *810* for sensing ambient light conditions and activate the LEDs *810* under low light conditions. The ambient light sensor *820* is also preferably covered sealed by a light-transmissive encapsulant *822*.

[0066] In another contemplated embodiment, a thermal sensor (not shown) is arranged on an inside surface of the collar *808* in thermal contact with the spout *804*. In the case of a metal or other highly thermally conductive spout *804*, the spout temperature closely follows the temperature of the water flowing therethrough, and so the thermal sensor can be used to control an aspect of the LED light output. For example, the LEDs *810* can include blue and red LEDs which light up variably as the water temperature increases from cold to hot, starting at mostly blue for cold water, and shifting toward mostly red for a high water temperature. This provides visual feedback regarding the water temperature which can be useful when preparing the shower water flow for use. If the water temperature exceeds a selected threshold, the red LEDs optionally flash to provide a warning indicator. Because the operator is often watching a control handle *830* for controlling water flow from the showerhead *802* during the preparation, it is also contemplated to arrange temperature-indicating blue, white, and red LEDs thereon. Of course, other colors besides the blue/white/red combination can also be employed.

[0067] With reference to FIGURE 13, another shower LED lamp embodiment *840* is shown. The lamp *840* is located under the handle *830*, mounted on a showerhead flow control handle shaft *842* on which the handle *830* is disposed. This mounting arrangement is similar to the mounting arrangement of the faucet handle night light *620* described with reference to FIGURE 7. The faucet handle *830* is preferably light transmissive so that light *844* (schematically represented by arrows) produced by the LED lamp *840* transmits through the handle *830*. The LED lamp *840* optionally

includes an ambient light sensor, thermal sensor, or other controlling sensor element, a printed circuit board with controller circuitry arranged thereon, or like elements (not shown).

[0068] With reference to FIGURE 14 , a suitable electrical circuit 850 for controlling an LED used for a night light is described. The circuit 850 includes, among other circuit elements, a voltage source 852 , a photoresistor 854 , a transistor 856 , and a first LED 858 . Current flows in the channel of the transistor 856 responsive to light on the photoresistor 854 dropping below a selected intensity. The transistor current drives the first LED 858 . Optionally, a second LED 860 is also energized responsive to operation of a manual switch 862 . The circuit 850 is suitable, for example, to drive the night light 620 or the night light 650 of FIGURES 8 and 9 , respectively, which provide night lighting responsive to a low light level. The circuit 850 is suitably embodied as circuitry arranged on the printed circuit board 626 of the night light 620 or on the printed circuit board 656 of the night light 650 . The second LED 860 is suitably embodied by the LED lamp 720 , shown in FIGURES 10 and 11 , which illuminates the water stream 710 .

[0069] With reference to FIGURE 15 , a suitable analog electronic circuit 880 includes a plurality of operational amplifiers (op amps) 882 cooperating with other circuit elements to control a red LED 884 and a blue LED 886 based on a water temperature input. A thermistor 888 in thermal contact with the water stream cooperates with a reference resistor 890 to provide a voltage reference indicative of the water temperature. The circuit 880 provides relatively stronger illumination from the red 884 and weaker illumination from the blue LED 886 responsive to a high temperature. At a predetermined high temperature threshold, the circuit 880 causes the red LED 884 to blink indicating an uncomfortably or dangerously high temperature. The circuit 880 provides relatively stronger illumination from the blue LED 886 and weaker illumination from the red LED 884 responsive to a cool temperature. The circuit 880 is suitable, for example, to drive the LED lamp 800 of FIGURE 12 when using a thermal sensor, i.e. the thermistor 888 .

[0070] With reference to FIGURE 16 , yet another suitable electronic circuit 900 for controlling a multi-color LED combination based on a water temperature is shown. A

thermistor *902* in thermal contact with the water stream cooperates with a reference resistor *904* to provide a voltage reference indicative of the water temperature. A microcontroller *906* cooperates with additional circuit elements to provide pulse width modulation (PWM) control of power input to a plurality of LEDs *908*, *910* of selected colors. The microprocessor-based circuit *900* is suitable, for example, for use in the lavatory *500* shown in FIGURE 5.

[0071] The circuits *850*, *880*, *900* of FIGURES 14 – 16 are exemplary only. Those skilled in the art can modify these circuits or provide other electrical arrangements that are suitable for specific applications and embodiments of the invention.

[0072] The invention has been described with reference to the preferred embodiments. Obviously, modifications and alterations will occur to others upon reading and understanding the preceding detailed description. It is intended that the invention be construed as including all such modifications and alterations insofar as they come within the scope of the appended claims or the equivalents thereof.